News release

Met Office and SITA join forces to help airlines

27 June 2005

In January 2005, American and European airlines lost $750 million due to weather-related delays. As a response to this global problem, the Met Office has joined forces with SITA INC (Information Networking Computing) to develop web-based solutions, which will save airlines money and improve punctuality.

The two companies - the most famous organisation in the world devoted to the provision of meteorological services, and the largest provider of IT solutions to the aviation industry - today announced their agreement to develop an Advanced Weather Service which will combine web-based graphical images and weather briefings with flight-plan route information. This will provide real-time, route-specific information to airline operations staff and pilots.

The interactive service will graphically show details of current weather and any significant forecast changes, which might affect a flight routeing such as clear air turbulence, hurricane warnings or volcanic eruptions. It will also provide weather alert warnings where airline-defined minimum landing requirements are compromised by actual and forecast airport weather conditions.

Toby Tucker, Director, Flight Operations, SITA INC said: "At the moment much of this information is either not available, or provided in various text formats. Presenting it visually will make choices on flight routes quicker and easier. For example, assessing projected flight-plan routes against the shifting track of a hurricane, particularly when aircraft are already in the air, and being able to take the necessary action will give aircraft operators a critical advantage."

"Airlines and pilots like to see graphically what en-route weather they are likely to encounter. For turbulence, the Met Office now offers the information in a more usable form, so that used in conjunction with the flight plan route, action can be taken in the planning stage to avoid these areas. The way it is represented currently can cause confusion. This new offering provides the information much more clearly, improving this vital capability."

John Mitchell, Chief Scientist at the Met Office, said: "These are challenging times for the air transport industry. Both SITA INC and the Met Office are focused on advanced systems which are both innovative and easy to use and which will help reduce airlines' costs. This will allow decisions to be taken earlier and improve turnaround times when the weather presents a threat. This partnership extends prediction capabilities far beyond current weather forecasts, providing value-added information and decision-making tools."

The Met Office and SITA INC are already combining to provide a unique De-icing Forecast Service to the air transport industry, which has recently been short-listed for the Flight International Aerospace Industry Awards. Providing predictions for weather conditions likely to cause icing at specific airports five days in advance, with more detail provided for the 24-hour period, the De-icing Service will also warn end-users when aircraft need to be de-iced.

The Advanced Weather Service will also be able to provide longer-range predictions of temperature, wind and pressure which will help airlines with weight critical sectors to plan more effectively.

Tucker explained: "Often high temperatures can mean that not all the payload can be carried. Having to use trends in actual reports, decisions are usually made on the day a few hours before take-off. This can mean offloading cargo or luggage to ensure that the maximum permitted take-off weight is not exceeded. Using this new service airlines will be able to work to a five-day forecast."

Met Office services to Aviation

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

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